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February 28, 2005

Honorable Diana DeGette  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1530 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative DeGette:

Cornell University strongly supports your legislation, HR 810, The Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act, expanding federal support for human stem cell research. As one of America's premier research institutions, Cornell is dedicated to knowledge transfer and the free exchange of ideas for the benefit of scientific progress. However, our commitment to such ideals has been hindered by the federal funding restrictions on human embryonic stem cell research.

More than three years have passed since President Bush articulated the current federal policy in this area in a nationally televised statement in August 2001. Since then, we have learned much more about the potential of research on human stem cells to open vistas of scientific research for future therapies and cures that could save millions of lives at risk today from diseases and medical conditions including Alzheimer's, cancer, juvenile diabetes and spinal cord injuries. We have also learned that the limitations placed by the existing federal policy are consigning U.S. medical research to the sidelines even as other nations are rushing to develop this field. As a result, it has become increasingly difficult to not only attract new scientists but also to retain current interest in stem cell research, due to concern that federal restrictions will limit its success.

Cornell University and the greater research community to which we belong salute your leadership. We thank you for your dedicated efforts to ensure the promise of medical research and healthy lives for all our citizens.

Sincerely,

Assistant Vice President

Cc: Vanda B. McMurtry  
Jacquie K. Powers